

2021

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR
THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Update to the Assembly on ACT Government Response to the
Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community
Services Report 10
Report on Inquiry into Maternity Services in the ACT
Recommendation 2**

**Presented by
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The ACT Government Response (the Government Response) to the Report on Inquiry into Maternity Services in the ACT (the Report) was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 13 August 2020.

The Government Response committed to providing the right maternity care at the right time, which meets the needs and requests of the family, and that a range of whole-of-government reforms across the human services system are needed to enhance responses for priority groups and improve systems and practices.

This included:

- a future focus on the ACT public maternity system to support models of care that are based on informed choice and recognise the importance of involvement of individuals and families across the maternity continuum;
- opportunities for growth to ensure models of care are more inclusive, accessible and culturally appropriate to meet preferences of the person and for them to feel supported;
- an emphasis on greater health and mental health support and provision of information and education, to provide an integrated and collaborative approach to maternity care across different healthcare and service providers. In particular, more mental health supports are needed for parents and partners, as well as increased supports for those experiencing perinatal loss; and
- a focus on ensuring all aspects of the services are person-, baby- and family-centered. To create an inclusive, informed and strategic public maternity system, a partnership with consumers, health professionals and other stakeholders is needed to ensure a holistic understanding of the needs of individuals and the community.

In response to Recommendation 2 of the Report, the Government committed to delivering an implementation plan for the national maternity strategy *Woman-centered care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services* (National Maternity Strategy) to the Legislative Assembly in the first quarter of 2021.

Progress and next steps

Representatives from the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD), Canberra Health Services (CHS) and Calvary Public Hospital at Bruce (CPHB) have been working collaboratively to address the recommendations of the Report and to create an implementation plan for the National Maternity Strategy. Work has been undertaken to map the recommendations and actions associated with the:

- Report on Inquiry into Maternity Services in the ACT;
- National Maternity Strategy;
- *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond*; and
- Evaluation of the Publicly Funded Homebirth Trial in the Australian Capital Territory.

Noting the significant synergies between these four reports as well as the recently published National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan, the Government has decided to take a strategic approach to the relevant recommendations from all of these reports. This will best address and support sustainable improvements to the ACT's public maternity sector on a system and service delivery level so that it meets the expectations and needs of consumers into the future.

As a result, the ACT Government is developing a comprehensive action plan that takes a strategic approach to public maternity services, instead of a standalone implementation plan for the National Maternity Strategy. The comprehensive plan will incorporate actions from the multiple maternity related reports as described above. Due to the complexity of this work and the importance of having the appropriate level of community, consumer and expert engagement, the Government will aim to finalise the plan and table it in the Legislative Assembly in the final quarter of 2021.

This comprehensive action plan will incorporate the recommendations within the National Maternity Strategy and will be in lieu of a stand-alone implementation plan for the National Maternity Strategy.

I look forward to presenting this work to the Legislative Assembly and the community, and to continuing our commitment to improve the services and health outcomes for mothers and their babies.